

Harmonized selection process

*Longer-term positions in the professional
and higher-level categories*

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Figure 1: Process flow

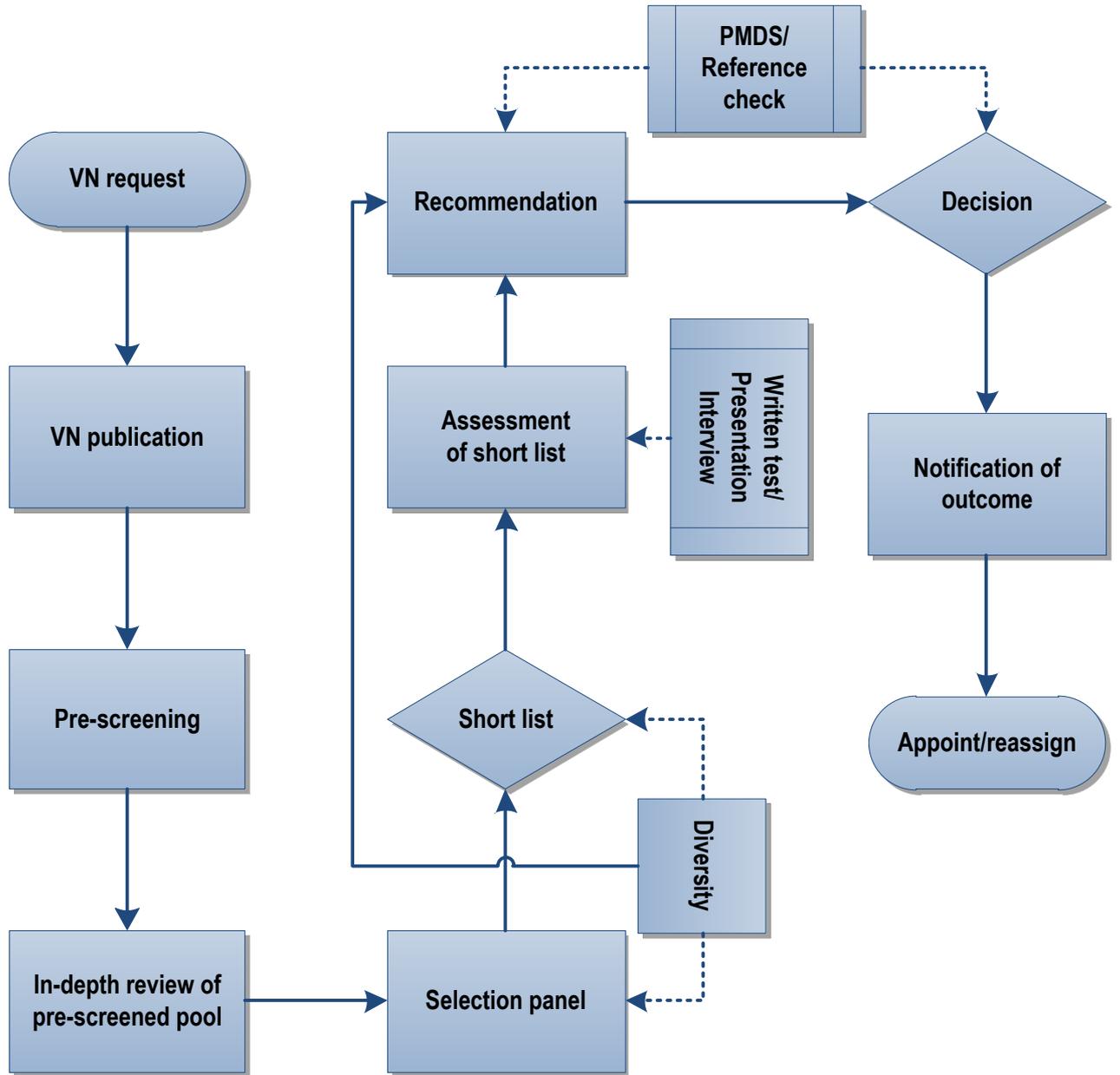


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I. Introduction

A. DEFINITION OF CONTEXT AND SCOPE

In the context of the WHO selection process, harmonization may be defined as the adjustment of differences and inconsistencies among different methods and procedures, in order to make them uniform or mutually compatible. Harmonization provides for the prevention or elimination of differences in the process and sets boundaries to the degree of their variation. While there are aspects of the process where harmonization may not be fully achievable due to the individual structures and environments, every effort must be made to harmonize the process to the maximum.

For the purposes of this paper, the fixed-term selection process is considered to be from receipt of a vacancy notice request through to the initiation of an action to appoint or reassign the selected candidate to the vacant position (Figure 1).

B. OBJECTIVE AND EXPECTED OUTCOME

The objective of this paper is to detail a harmonized global competitive process for the selection of staff for longer-term positions in the professional and higher-level categories, which will ensure consistency, efficiency and transparency in staffing the Organization.

It is expected that a harmonized selection process will provide a) a set of process standards across the Organization, b) a more streamlined process, c) increased transparency, d) strengthened WHO “brand”, and e) an improved candidate experience.

II. Guiding principles

A. GENERAL

1. The selection of fixed-term internationally recruited staff should be made in the best interest of the Organization and in accordance with its policies and regulations. The selection process should be fair, transparent and objective.

2. The final selection of fixed-term internationally recruited staff will be made by the relevant decision-maker, based on a recommendation made by a Selection Panel (see Paragraph 52).

B. CANDIDATE PRIORITY, PREFERENCE AND CONSIDERATION

3. Of paramount importance in the selection process is the recruitment of staff with the highest standard of competence, efficiency and integrity (Staff Regulation 4.2). In this context, the selection of staff members shall be without regard to race, creed or sex.

4. Without prejudice to the inflow of fresh talent at the various levels, vacancies shall be filled by persons already in the service of the Organization in preference to persons from outside. In accordance with Staff Rule 1050.5.2, staff members shall be given due preference for vacancies during the reassignment period, within the context of Staff Rule 1050.4. Under e-Manual III.10.11.230, a staff member whose position has been abolished and who wishes to be considered for positions at a higher grade must apply and compete with other applicants in accordance with established selection procedures, with due preference given to him or her during the reassignment period within the context of Staff Rule 1050.3. If assessed by the Selection Panel as meeting the minimum requirements of the position, due preference requires that the staff member is

included in any testing or interview, or is interviewed if no preliminary tests are being conducted. The Secretary of the Reassignment Committee informs the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist, as Secretary of the relevant Selection Panel, accordingly. In addition, staff members whose appointments have been terminated in the context of a reassignment process, whose service has been fully satisfactory, and who wish to be considered for vacancies during the 12 months following their separation, are considered for vacancies for which they are qualified in preference to equally qualified external candidates.

D. DIVERSITY

5. The selection process will pay particular attention to the decisions/resolutions of the World Health Assembly on diversity. Due regard shall be paid to the Organization's commitment to increasing the representation of women in the professional and higher categories, and to the importance of recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible.

6. WHO is committed to providing equality of access to employment, advancement and retention in the Organization, recognizing that it is in the Organization's interest to recruit and maintain a diverse and skilled workforce that is representative of the diverse nature of society, for example persons with disabilities.

E. CONFIDENTIALITY

7. The confidentiality of the selection process is of paramount importance and must be fully respected by all parties. The deliberations and discussions of the Selection Panel are strictly confidential and should not be disclosed outside the Panel, either immediately after the meetings or at any later stage. A breach of confidentiality may lead to the imposition of disciplinary measures.

F. FAMILY AND SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIPS

8. Selection Panel members should be aware that:

- a) appointment shall not be granted to a person who is related to another staff member under Staff Rules 410.3 (father, mother, son daughter, brother, sister), except where another person equally well-qualified cannot be recruited;
- b) the spouse of a staff member may be appointed provided that the spouse is fully qualified for the position and provided that the spouse is not given any preference for appointment by virtue of the relationship to the staff member.
- c) a staff member who is related to another staff member under Staff Rule 410.3 (father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister) and Staff Rule 410.3.1 (spouse) shall not be assigned to serve in a position which is superior or subordinate in the line of authority to the position occupied by the staff member to whom he or she is related;
- d) a staff member who is related to another staff member as specified under Staff Rules 410.3 and 410.3.1 shall not participate in the process of selection, assignment, reassignment or transfer of the related staff member.

G. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

9. Where upon receipt of the background materials for a selection, a Selection Panel Member becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest with regard to a candidate under consideration, another Selection Panel Member, or any aspect of the process where the Selection Panel Member's ability to be entirely objective may be compromised, the issue must be immediately brought to the attention of the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist. A further opportunity to declare a potential conflict of interest is provided at the opening of the first meeting of the Selection Panel. Where required, a decision on whether the

Selection Panel Member should be replaced will be taken by Director, HRD at headquarters and by Director, Administration and Finance in the Regions.

10. If at any point during the process, a Selection Panel Member becomes aware that he/she or another Selection Panel Member has a relationship with any of the short-listed candidates that could be construed as grounds for partiality (that is, blood relation, partnership, marriage or any other family or personal relationship that may impede impartial judgment), he/she should immediately inform the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist. The same applies to any Selection Panel Member who has a family or personal relationship with any other Selection Panel Member. Where required, a decision on whether the Selection Panel Member should be replaced will be taken by Director, HRD at headquarters and by Director, Administration and Finance in the Regions.

11. Failure to disclose a conflict of interest may lead to the imposition of disciplinary measures.

12. Short-listed candidates are informed of the Selection Panel composition as soon as the short list is confirmed. Any perceived conflict of interest should be raised with HR within 48 hours. The Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist will discuss the perceived conflict of interest with the other Selection Panel Members and take the necessary steps to find a replacement, if required.

III. Advertising vacancies

A. VACANCY NOTICE

13. Before initiating a request to issue a vacancy notice, the Hiring Manager will ensure that the position description is up to date and in line with the approved HR Plan. It is recommended that special care and attention are given to the recruitment profile of the position, and that the advice and guidance of the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist is sought in this regard. The requirements and competencies indicated in the recruitment profile are crucial and will be used for the vacancy notice, and subsequently for the screening and assessment of applicants. Since vacancy notices reflect the content of a duly approved and classified position description, and are verified by the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist as such, additional clearance of draft vacancy notices is not required.

14. Vacancy notices will indicate the potential to fill multiple positions of a similar profile at the same grade level, including those of a temporary nature, for a period of 12 months. In the course of a selection process, all recommended qualified candidates may be retained for consideration for similar positions at the same grade level with the same minimum requirements, without the issuance of a further vacancy notice or candidate assessment. Pre-qualified candidates of this kind should be presented to the Hiring Manager for consideration once a similar vacancy is identified and in advance of issuing a vacancy notice. In the event that the Hiring Manager does not select from among this pre-qualified pool of candidates, a vacancy notice will be issued. A candidate's profile will remain active in this category for a period of 12 months from the date of the approval of the Selection Panel's recommendation. A prequalification of this kind does not constitute any obligation or commitment on behalf of the Organization to appoint, reassign or promote a candidate to a similar position. The vacancy notice will include standard text to this effect.

15. Vacancy notices for positions from P1 up to and including D2 are advertised, using the e-Recruitment platform, internally and externally for a period of 3 weeks from the date of issuance, and for not less than 10 working days. The publication period may be extended beyond 3 weeks when required.

16. All vacancy notices for professional positions are issued in English, other than in the Regional Office for Africa where they are issued in English and/or French. Issuance of vacancy notices in other WHO official languages will depend on the target audience.

B. OUTREACH

17. The Hiring Manager is responsible for ensuring wide dissemination of the vacancy notice through technical channels and networks, and various media (journals, social networks, job sites, etc.) In consultation with the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist, the Hiring Manager considers the options available. Related costs are borne by the hiring department.

C. EXECUTIVE SEARCH FIRMS

18. Executive search firms may be engaged, at the hiring department's expense, to identify high-calibre candidates for senior positions or for very specific technical functions, and to then encourage these candidates to apply through WHO's e-Recruitment. The firms may also provide expert guidance and input in the selection process. In such cases, the vacancy notice will include text to the effect that the selection process, while adhering to WHO standard procedures, may also include certain additional steps undertaken by the external firm, for example, preliminary interviews, psychometric testing, and preparation of capability assessments for consideration by the Selection Panel when establishing a final short list. The engagement of an executive search firm does not have any impact on the priority given to WHO staff.

19. Applications are normally received through e-Recruitment. Off-line applications may be accepted in exceptional circumstances, but candidates are nonetheless encouraged to make every effort to create a profile in e-Recruitment. Applications received after the vacancy notice has closed are not accepted.

20. While the vacancy notice is published, the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist will confirm a timeline for the selection process (in keeping with the target 15-week timeline set out in Annex 1) and identify Selection Panel Members, it being understood that the composition of the Selection Panel cannot be confirmed until the list of candidates is known, and an opportunity has been provided to raise any conflict of interest. During this period, the Hiring Manager will develop written test and interview questions for consideration by the Selection Panel later in the process.

21. In the event that a Hiring Manager wishes to withdraw a vacancy notice, a written justification will be submitted to the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist who may, if required, refer the request for decision to Director, HRD at headquarters, or to Director, Administration and Finance in the Regions. Candidates will be informed of the withdrawal of a vacancy notice.

IV. Selection Panel

22. Diversity among the members of the Selection Panel in terms of geographical origin and gender representation is desirable. The participation of the representative of the staff (designated by the Staff Association) and of the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist is not restricted by grade. The remaining Selection Panel Members shall be at a grade not lower than that of the position to be filled. The Independent Panel Member and Staff Representative are identified from departments other than the department in which the vacant position is located.

23. It is desirable that all Selection Panel members will have received a comprehensive briefing by the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist, on the selection process, and will have undergone training in competency-based and gender-sensitive interviewing techniques.

A. PANEL COMPOSITION FOR POSITIONS UP TO AND INCLUDING P5 GRADE

24. The standard Selection Panel for positions up to and including P5 is composed of four members, as follows:

- the Hiring Manager, normally responsible for chairing the Panel;
- a representative of the staff designated by the Staff Association;
- an Independent Panel Member, preferably with technical knowledge of the subject area of the vacant position, from another cluster or department identified by the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist;
- Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist

Each of the above has full panel member status and is required to sign the Selection Report. The roles and responsibilities of the Selection Panel Members are detailed in Annex 2.

B. PANEL COMPOSITION FOR POSITIONS AT P6/D1 AND D2 GRADES

25. For positions at the P6/D1 and D2 levels, the Selection Panel is composed as follows:

Headquarters

- Hiring Manager: ADG of the cluster in which the position is located or a staff member from the same cluster designated by him/her;
- another ADG or a Regional Director, or a staff member designated by him/her;
- Director, HRD or a staff member designated by him/her;
- a representative of the staff designated by the HQ Staff Committee.

Regions

- Hiring Manager: Regional Director or a staff member designated by him/her;
- ADG responsible for the area of work or a Regional Director from another region, or a staff member designated by him/her;
- Director, Administration and Finance, or a staff member designated by him/her;
- a representative of the staff designated by the Regional Staff Association.

Each of the above has full panel member status and is required to sign the Selection Report. The roles and responsibilities of the Selection Panel Members are detailed in Annex 2.

C. SELECTION PANEL MEETINGS

26. In the event that the Staff Association, having been invited to participate in the Selection Panel, opts not to be represented in the Panel, this should be clearly documented in the Selection Report.

27. Selection Panel Members should be available to attend all meetings and interviews. Only in very exceptional circumstances, such as an unforeseen long absence, should a Selection Panel Member be replaced once the process is under way. While it is to be avoided insofar as is possible, in the event that the replacement of a Selection Panel Member is considered necessary, it must be ensured that all candidates are interviewed by the same Selection Panel Members. A final decision on whether a replacement is required will be taken by Director, HRD at headquarters and Director, Administration and Finance in the Regions.

D. WHO HOSTED PARTNERSHIPS

28. For leadership positions of Partnerships or co-sponsored programmes hosted by WHO, a different Selection Panel composition may be required to allow for participation of the governing body of the Partnership. Any deviation from the standard panel composition must be approved by the Director-General for selections at headquarters, or by the Regional Director for selections in the Regions. The vacancy notice will indicate that special selection procedures apply.

V. Screening

A. PRELIMINARY SCREENING

29. The Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist conducts a preliminary screening of the applicants who applied during the defined posting period, based on responses provided by applicants to vacancy-specific screening questions. Screening questions are formulated by the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist, in consultation with the Hiring Manager, for each individual vacancy on the basis of the minimum requirements and desirables reflected in the classified position description.

B. IN-DEPTH EVALUATION OF PRE-SCREENED CANDIDATES

30. The results of the preliminary screening are provided to the Hiring Manager with a list of all applicants, together with standardized tools to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the candidates who *appear*, on the basis of their responses to screening questions, to match the recruitment profile (see Annex 3 – WHO Hiring Manager’s Guide to Screening Candidates). WHO candidates whose responses to the screening questions indicate that they do not meet the minimum requirements are also included in the list in order to ensure that they have not mistakenly disqualified themselves. In evaluating the candidates, the Hiring Manager is only permitted to use the criteria specifically stated in the vacancy notice. Initially, candidates are assessed against the minimum requirements only, with desirables only coming into play when candidates are of equal merit based on the minimum requirements. The Hiring Manager proposes a short list of normally a maximum of five candidates. Where a larger pool of suitable candidates is identified, the Hiring Manager will normally use an eliminatory written test (to be conducted through the e-Recruitment system) to further screen candidates.

C. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS – COMPENSATION AND EQUIVALENCY

31. In accordance with Information Note 13/2010 - Guidelines on standard minimum experience and education requirements, relevant experience may compensate for educational requirements, and vice versa beyond post-secondary education. For General Service staff who do not meet the minimum educational qualifications specified in the vacancy notice, in accordance with e-Manual III.4.1.220, they may be considered eligible to apply for Professional positions up to and including P.3 if:

- it can be demonstrated that they have the full body of the knowledge required for the position in question;
- they have a minimum of six years of progressive WHO experience relevant to the vacancy.

VI. Selection process

A. CONFIRMATION OF SHORT LIST OF CANDIDATES AND NEXT STEPS

32. The Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist convenes a meeting of the Selection Panel through the most efficient medium available, in advance of which is distributed relevant background material relevant to the selection, including a list of applicants, the results of the screening process, and an overview of both the Organization's and hiring Cluster's (headquarters) or Department's (Regions) current gender balance and geographical distribution among its fixed-term staff. The objective of the meeting is to establish a final short list and to agree on how to best assess the short-listed candidates' suitability for the position. Decisions taken at this stage of the process are recorded by the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist and will be included in the final Selection Report.

33. If after reviewing the Hiring Manager's evaluation of candidates, the Selection Panel is satisfied that a viable pool of candidates exists, the selection process will proceed on this basis. Only candidates who meet the minimum requirements may be included in the short list. One candidate may constitute a viable short list.

34. The Hiring Manager will provide the Selection Panel with proposed questions/topics for a written test, presentation and interview, as applicable (see Paragraph 37). In all cases, the Hiring Manager will also prepare expected answers to facilitate the Selection Panel's assessment of candidates. The proposed weightings of the written test, presentation and interview are agreed by the Panel at this stage.

35. Once the Selection Panel is satisfied that the above-steps, the overriding spirit of transparency and equality, and the applicable Staff Regulations have been respected, the short list is agreed.

B. GENDER BALANCE AND GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

36. Without compromising on the quality of staff selected, every effort will be made to ensure that decision makers are presented with a diverse set of qualified candidates, in terms of gender and geographical representation. In line with decisions/resolutions of the World Health Assembly on diversity, and the Organization's commitment to increasing gender parity in each staff category, particularly in the professional and higher categories, Hiring Managers will be expected to short list at least one qualified woman meeting all of the minimum requirements of the position. Where the short list does not reflect such diversity, justification will be required in the Selection Report.

C. CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT METHODS

37. Once a short list is established, the Selection Panel agrees on the position-related competency-based questions and technical areas to be assessed in the selection process, in line with the competencies and requirements set out in the vacancy notice. A written test and/or presentation may be included in addition to the mandatory interview.

D. WRITTEN TEST (OPTIONAL)

38. The Selection Panel decides whether a written test is administered. The written test may be used as an eliminatory or complementary assessment tool. Written tests are normally administered to examine technical/functional competence and/or to assess writing skills in the languages specified in the vacancy notice.

39. Written tests are conducted blind using the e-testing facility in e-Recruitment.

40. The written test must be relevant to the functions of the position as reflected in the vacancy notice and objectively designed. Written test questions are normally developed and evaluated by the Hiring Manager, and shared among the other Selection Panel Members for their review. A minimum of two scorers is required. Authorship of the papers is only revealed to the Selection Panel Members after the interviews have taken place.

41. Candidates will be informed that failure to reference material from any source, including the internet, WHO intranet, WHO publications and academic material (including that to which they have contributed), will lead to the disqualification of their application and, in the case of WHO staff members, may lead to the imposition of disciplinary measures. In all cases, the papers are submitted through a programme to detect plagiarism.

E. PRESENTATION (OPTIONAL)

42. Presentations are normally recommended for higher-level positions. The Selection Panel agrees on a presentation topic, preparatory and delivery time, target audience, and maximum number of slides, if visuals are permitted.

F. INTERVIEW (MANDATORY)

43. Interviews are arranged by the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist. The interview may be a combination of technical and competency-based questions, and may also assess aspects such as general attitude, and overall suitability for the position and international service. It may be limited to a maximum of five competency areas as reflected in the position description. Follow-up and probing questions may be asked to elicit more information from the candidate. The same technical skills and competencies will be explored for all candidates in a particular selection.

44. Competency-based interviews will, insofar as is possible, include questions in all languages specified in the minimum requirements of the position description, in order to ascertain whether the candidates meet the language requirements set out in the vacancy notice. To this end, it is important that the Selection Panel has the capacity to assess these languages.

45. If candidates are at different locations, interviews are normally conducted by video conference. Face-to-face interviews, especially those that would require travel, should be kept to a minimum and are normally used only for senior positions, or for specific profiles. Interviews may be conducted by telephone if no other option exists. All WHO candidates

must be interviewed through the same medium. While it is preferable to interview all candidates through the same medium, other UN and external candidates may be interviewed through the most efficient method available, insofar as WHO candidates are not perceived to be disadvantaged. For example, if WHO candidates are interviewed by video, other candidates should not be interviewed face-to-face.

46. The Selection Panel will interview all shortlisted candidates, with the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist completing an individual Candidate Assessment Form (Annex 4) for each candidate, reflecting the Panel's collective assessment.

VII. PMDS and reference checks

47. The PMDS reports of WHO candidates who are included in the short list are consulted by the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist, and any performance issues and comments by the staff member thereto are brought to the attention of the Selection Panel.

48. In the case of external candidates, reference checks will be initiated, preferably before candidates are invited for interview. Although time constraints or other factors may require this step to be completed after the interview, references must be collected at the very latest before the appointment action is initiated by the hiring department.

49. At least two references must be taken from previous employers, using the standard WHO Reference Request Form (Annex 5). Guidelines on How to Take References (Annex 6) should be consulted.

VIII. Recommendation and decision

A. RECOMMENDATION

50. The Selection Panel discusses the overall results of the candidate assessment, and explores whether consensus can be reached regarding the individual candidates' suitability for the position. A candidate who does not satisfy the minimum requirements of the position, as set out in the vacancy notice, cannot be recommended for selection.

51. The Selection Panel will first identify the recommendable candidates and then rank them in order of overall suitability and best fit. In its deliberations, the Selection Panel must also be mindful of the priority, preference and consideration to be shown to different categories of staff members (see Paragraphs 3 to 5). Where the Selection Panel's suitability ranking is not in keeping with the overall scores achieved in the interview and other competitive stages, an explanation must be provided why strict numerical ranking is not in the best interests of the Organization. On this basis, the Selection Panel submits a final recommendation (Selection Report - Annex 7) to the appropriate decision maker, recommending, where possible, the three most suitable candidates based on their overall performance in the assessment. If consensus is not reached, the differing views are fully documented in the Selection Report for consideration by the decision-maker who will make the final selection. The Selection Report is signed by all Selection Panel Members.

B. DECISION

52. In the case of positions up to and including P6/D1 levels, the Selection Panel makes its recommendation to the ADG of the cluster at headquarters, and to the Regional Director in the regions. For positions at the D2 level, recommendations are submitted to the Director-General.

53. Where recommended candidates are of equal merit, the priority, preferences and considerations set out in Paragraphs 3 to 5 will be observed.

C. AFTER DECISION

54. After the relevant decision-maker has selected a candidate, the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist communicates the outcome to the Hiring Manager who is given the opportunity to personally inform the selected candidate. Once the selected candidate has been notified, the Regional HR Manager/HR Specialist confirms to the candidate his/her selection in writing, stipulating that a formal offer of appointment will be subject to prerequisites, including a reference check and medical examination. Upon the selected candidate's acceptance of a formal offer of appointment, regrets are issued to the other candidates. In the event that the selected candidate declines the offer, the Selection Panel's recommendation will again be referred to the decision maker to decide on a second candidate, where one has been recommended, or if not, to re-advertise the position.

55. The original Selection Report and supporting documentation are confidential documents and are retained in HR, in accordance with the Recruitment Records Retention Schedule, for three years after the selection process has been completed.

IX. Accountability

56. The Hiring Manager is responsible and will be held accountable for the integrity and outcome of the process, up to the final selection decision.

X. List of annexes

1. Timeline for completion of selection process
2. Selection Panel composition
3. WHO Hiring Manager's guide to screening candidates
4. Candidate assessment form
5. Reference request form
6. Guidelines on how to take references
7. Selection Report

The above annexes are available to HR staff in their respective offices.